

*Incidents of a Great Race  
Which Assumed the Character  
of an International Contest*

# SHOOTING STAR

BY  
GERALD BEAUMONT

A star that burns the veins of night  
And beats the heavens in its flight.  
Squanders its wealth with one blow show  
That night remains save afterglow.

**W**HEN Lady Courageous, running in bandages, beat St. Ivan on a neck on the post in the Pennington handicap, thereby repaying her debt to Sandy McKee, her owner took the little bay mare back to California, and there, with Tod Pennington, set about rebuilding the once famous Pennington stable.

Operating as partners, they bought back Bonnie Brae, the family stock-farm in the Livermore valley, and undertook to resurface the circular mile track and modernize the training quarters from which in the old days Lord Valor, True Blue and other celebrated Pennington horses had gone forth to fame and glory.

There was one point upon which Sandy McKee insisted with Scotch stubbornness.

"All that I asked of her, the Lady did. Never again will I send her to the post."

To which Tod made reply, one arm around the trainer's shoulder and looking for all the world like old Col. Pennington himself: "She's your mare, Sandy, and you're a sentimental old idiot; but I love you!"

The "sentimental old idiot" sniffed disapprovingly and promptly consigned the last three words to the treasure-chest of his memory, along with such visible associations as old Col. Pennington's watch, presented when Valor hung up the half-and-quarter mark at Latonia, and a pair of faded red bandages with which Sandy McKee had brought about the return of Lady Courageous.

While Tod Pennington supervised the work of reconstruction, McKee took Lady Courageous north of Sonoma county, the Valley of the Moon, and there she was mated to Cloud of War, the great Montgomery stallion for whom three foreign governments had bid unsuccessfully.

Bruce Montgomery, millionaire sportsman, laid down but one condition:

"You know my rule, Sandy, the get stays in America. I want this country to retain the peer of the thoroughbred."

"That suits me," said Sandy. "There's nothing too good for the Pennington colors. All the Lady backs is bone and weight, and your horse has both. The foal will be short above and long below, and if he has the Valor heart, you can look for a world-beater."

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In a week or so he was fairly way-wise.

Meanwhile the Pennington stables expanded. More seasoned horses were added to the string, together with a few youngsters, including Machine Gun, a handsome bay colt by Cloud of War, out of the Kentucky mare, Marabelle Lee.

Trained especially for the event, Firelight repeated her success in the Pennington handicap, but she had to be ridden out hard to last a nose in front of Captain Davis. More and more horses were making it an object of honor to break the Pennington grasp on the Latonia classic.

"The game is coming back," Pennington commented. "Next year some of those two-year-olds will be hard to beat."

McKee nodded. "I'm glad to see it come; we'll break a few watches ourselves."

The younger man smiled indulgently. "What with?" he inquired.

Pennington's grin broadened. "The colt will break plenty of barriers and a few necks, but the only way he'll ever smash a watch is by jumping on it. I'm banking on his half-brother."

Sandy McKee puffed reflectively at his pipe a moment. "All other things being equal," he deliberated, "I pick the colt for what I see through the window of his eye when he's excited. Experience told him that Shooting Star would come back to the field, but anxiety and caution prompted him to keep within driving distance in case the unexpected should happen and the bay colt forget to quit."

McKee shrugged. "I don't really, perhaps, or desire. It's what makes a thoroughbred run out a race of a broken leg." Lady Courageous had it; so did Lord Valor and True Blue; it's almost Pennington characteristic.

"What about Machine Gun?"

"It's there," admitted the trainer, "but not to the same extent as in Shooting Star. The Star has almost too much for my liking—too much fire, and I don't understand it. I never felt that way before about a horse."

"For what?"

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THE long pleasant days slipped past, and as Shooting Star approached racing condition his temperament peculiarities became more pronounced. Race horses and athletes are alike in that respect—the closer they approach to being on edge, the more difficult it is to handle them.

The son of Lady Courageous finished in the ruck and was led away shamelessly to the stables, where he ran at his groom open-mouthed, kicked over water buckets, scattered his feed and behaved with characteristic clownishness.

It was about this time that turfmen began to discuss the possibilities of a match race between Machine Gun and the crack Canadian three-year-old Trafalgar. The latter had made racing history by winning the Canadian derby in his first start, and, like Machine Gun, he had never been beaten. He came from a long line of English derby winners, and he was regarded as generally as invincible over a mile or longer that few horses had the temerity to risk the reputation of their stables against him.

Tod Pennington received an invitation to bring his stable across the border. He laid the matter before Sandy McKee.

"If they want the race, let them come after it," advised the trainer cannily. "Ten thousand to the winner, a mile and a quarter, and old Latonia in October."

"The Pennington handicap?"

"Why not? If they think Trafalgar can take it away from us, that's their chance."

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer scowled. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the finish."

"Right as usual," Tod acknowledged. "There's nothing like meeting a man on your own ground."

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PENNINGTON dressed hurriedly and made his way down the avenue of maples. And there in the darkened stall, he found Sandy McKee huddling over a seal-brown foal that squirmed feebly on the straw under its mother's caresses.

"Colt," whispered Sandy, "and he's come ahead of time. But didn't I tell you he'd be 'short above and long below; look at those legs!'"

Pennington's eyes rounded. "Glory!" he ejaculated. "But you'll have to feed him with a bottle."

McKee nodded. "I'm having some flannels heated. We'd better go out now."

On the tanbar corridor Pennington halted. "What shall we name him?"

The trainer mused a moment and then he related the incident of the night before. "I'm not much of a jockey," he admitted, "but this one

is pretty strong, and it makes a nice name, suppose we call him Shooting Star?"

McKee's analysis proved true. Shooting Star lived up to his name, and when almost amounted to a premoult, warned Sandy that a shooting star comes from nowhere and ends in the same place, that was the name finally selected for the son of Lady Courageous.

Almost before they knew it, the colt flesh disappeared and Shooting Star was a long-legged clown of the stable, whose chief characteristic was a tendency to jump out of his skin at the least provocation. Two days after being backed he was following other thoroughbreds around the track, and

got the Cloud of War jawbone, and the boy can't rate him."

McKee's analysis proved true. Shooting Star lived up to his name at the Montreal, Windsor and New York tracks, conjecture as to what would happen in the event the two horses ever met was the source of argument wherever horsemen gathered.

It was more patriotism than judgment that influenced American turf followers to support the chances of the Pennington colors, for the Cana-

bian continued to campaign successfully on the western tracks, and Trafalgar hung up mark after mark at the Montreal, Windsor and New York tracks.

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bian stared and then spoke up impatiently.

"See here, Sandy, I'm not going to have the colors disgraced in the Pennington handicap, nor am I going to throw away a million dollars in good American money. If Shooting Star goes to the post, the bets on the stable stand."

"And if he doesn't go," cut the trainer, "you'll break the Pennington tradition, and what's more, they'll accuse us of deliberately crippling the horse to dodge the race. Shooting Star goes to the post."

"No."

Mechanically the trainer brushed off his clothes and pulled a battered hat more firmly over his gray hair.

"Well, good-bye, Tod," he said, and turned away.

but use your own judgment. There's no sense in punishing a horse when he's not a quitter. Shooting Star will race his heart out, and he couldn't do more than that if you whipped him all the way."

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THERE was a commotion at the entrance to the paddock, and a man with a badge ordered the jockeys on their mounts. One by one they filed into the runway leading to the track. The crowd scrambled back to the ring and the stands. In the distance a bugle sounded.

McKee and Pennington shouldered their way to a spot just below the press box, where they could hear the voice of the official caller, and could with the aid of field glasses obtain a fair view of the start.

The field cantered past the stands and then came splattering past Trafalgar on the rail, Shooting Star shaking his head at the unaccustomed hood and moving sideways in the No. 3 position. The others moved past, sedately or plodding, as their temperaments dictated.

Over the multitude settled the expectant hush which tries the nerves of the most experienced horsemen. It was a big field, and there was too much at stake for the starter to take any chances. The minutes dragged by, and there were two false starts.

"Shooting Star," muttered Pennington, "you're raising the mischief. There he goes again."

A bay colt burst through the webbing, plunged to a stop and went sidling back. They could see the starter waving one arm vigorously.

"The longer they stay there, the better," McKee whispered. "The black is carrying 127 pounds, and we've got a thirty-pound advantage. Terry's trying to beat the barrier, too! Who's that doing all the kicking?"

"The Hobart mare—Shooting Star crowded her. Terry can't get away with that stuff; he'd better look out; he can't get through—Ah!"

"They're off!"

The cry broke from a thousand throats and rumbled off into a thrashing roar. Down the track a rush of color flared suddenly. The voice of the official caller came to them jerkily.

"Trafalgar, Sea Queen, Argument, Rock Legion, Jackanapes, St. George, Steel King, Shooting Star—"

Tod Pennington lowered his glasses and laid a hand on the shoulder of McKee.

"It's all in the game, old pal," he comforted. "The colt wheel'd the wrong way, and that's no fault of yours."

The trainer made reply dully: "I haven't anything. We can put O'Neill up and run Shooting Star in blinkers. He's the greatest quarter horse in America."

"And this is a mile-and-a-quarter race," said Pennington grimly. "To my aunt!"

McKee's face quivered. He was close to breaking down.

"If I had nothing but a selling plater, I'd start him in the colors today and go down rooting for him. All I want is to see Shooting Star out there leading Trafalgar; and then I'll feel that I've done all I can."

"Gad!" exploded Pennington. "Gad—you're a thoroughbred, Sandy; you make me ashamed of myself! Blamed if I don't pray Shooting Star on the nose. Shake."

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AT the half-mile post, as though

the half-mile post, as though

the half-mile post, as though

the half-mile post,

the half-mile post,